The Crucible - Themes and messages

A Summary

Reputation

The play asks the question: what is a good reputation?

Truth and lies

The irony is that those supposedly on the side of "truth" have to lie in order to protect their position. This perpetuates a cycle of lies.

Ultimately truth triumphs - Proctor tells the truth about his affair **then** tells the truth that he has no involvement in witchcraft. He breaks the cycle of lies in Salem.

Guilt and innocence

The irony is that those that commit the greatest wrongs in this story are less inclined to confess their guilt (Parris / Danforth). Those that commit lesser crimes (Proctor) suffer more.

Hysteria

Widespread feeling that order has been threatened. This is a actually used as an opportunity to vent frustrations.

Power

Those in authority struggle to maintain their hold on power: Parris, Hathorne, Danforth. In the meantime, ordinary people use the trials (consciously or not) to gain more power: Abigail, Mary, Putnam.